'Symbols and Symbolic Language in the Visual Arts' (ARTH 389G, Fall 2015)
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I. Assignments for Sustainable Scholarship
1) Analysis of Readings: My course includes several opportunities for the investigation of sustainablity. The class is divided into four groups who will take turns presenting the assigned readings, and each group will have at least one week in which the assignment is specifically designed to highlight the problems of sustainability and recycled knowledge. For example, in the syllabus, the scheduled readings for September 22 address a diacrhonic survey of interpretations of Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding* portrait, ranging from Panofsky's 1930s iconological appproach to the highly subjective, anti-iconological 1980s approach of Linda Seidel. Yet as students will see through these readings, Seidel and other, more recent scholars have still continued to engage Panofsky's original insights, effectively (if not quitre respectfully) 'recycling' the iconologist's conclusions while questioning his methods and assumptions. Other sets of lectures and readings (e.g., those concerning the highly enigmatic symbolism of Bellini's and Titian's paintings for Alfonso d'Este's *camerino* at Ferrara) are focused on cases in which important insights in early scholarship are consciously rejected, casually discarded or simply forgotten by entire generations of scholars, only later to be rediscovered and proven correct. These cases illustrate the unfortunate consequences of a wasteful approach while also arguing for a conservationist approach to the history of interpretative scholarship.

2) Research Paper: The course also includes a final research paper, which requires the student to select a topic in which there is a long history of scholarship behind a single symbol or a single symbolic work of art. While today's students are often tempted to limit their bibliographic research to the use of search engines such as Google, or more specialized databases with a limited chronological scope, I will illustrate how these modern search tools very often fail to retrieve important, major scholarly works published in the distant past and still fully accessible in our libraries. I will teach students the research resources and techniques which will allow them to recover older scholarship from the ever-growing trash-heap of art-historical bibliography.

II. Sustainability-related learning outcomes:
1) An ability to recover relevant bibliographic sources from the distant past even when they have been forgotten, discredited or ignored by more recent scholarship. This entails the development of skills in the use of pre-digital bibliographical tools, demonstrated primarily in the research paper.

2) The acquisition of a conservationist approach to past interpretative scholarship, no matter how historically distant or philosophically alien that scholarship may seem. Here I am looking specifically for an ability to historically contextualize and engage interpretations pertaining to the old 'objective' model of symbolic interpretation, to understand whether or how these past scholars' work may have been 'recycled' in more recent publications, and/or for the students themselves to actively 'recycle' this 'old' scholarship in their own work. This will be demonstrated primarily through the research paper, where students will be required to select a topic whose bibliography spans the 'iconological'/'objective' through semiotic/reception-based ('subjective') periods of scholarly inquiry.

3) The ability to recognize when more recent scholarship has too lightly discarded the scholarship of the past, and to renew valid lines of inquiry which have been abandoned or unjustly discredited in the name of 'newness' and 'modernity.' This will be demonstrated both through the presentation and analysis of assigned readings and in the research paper.

The rubric to be used in the evaluation of the research paper will surely be refined further, but the sustainability-related portion will look something like this:

	Excellent	Good/Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
1) Ability to perceive and articulate the analogical concept of 'sustainable scholarship' (i.e., the notion that the interpretation of a symbolic image cannot be exhaustive or definitive, but always opens new questions).				
2) Ability to 'recycle' past scholarship specifically by reclaiming and re-examining now-forgotten or previously discarded interpretative arguments.				
3) Ability to construct original arguments that do not foreclose the possibilities of future research - and thus foresee a sustainable future of research.				